

WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVES PROGRAM

Q. What is the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)?

- A. WHIP is a voluntary program that encourages creation of high quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife populations of national, state, tribal, and local significance. Through WHIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides cost-share payments for development and protection of upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas.

Q. Where are WHIP applications accepted?

- A. WHIP applications are accepted at USDA service centers or conservation district offices. They also may be accepted by cooperating conservation partners approved or designated by NRCS.

Q. What land is eligible for WHIP?

- A. Eligible lands include privately owned land; federal land when the primary benefit is on private or tribal land; state and local government land on a limited basis; and tribal land.

Q. I do not currently participate in Farm Bill programs. Am I eligible to participate in WHIP?

- A. You are welcome to participate in the program. If you enroll land in WHIP, you will need to meet certain conservation compliance and wetland conservation requirements. Your local NRCS office will assist you with these program requirements.

Q. What is the duration of WHIP agreements?

- A. WHIP provides cost-share payments to landowners under agreements that are usually 5 to 10 years in duration, depending upon the practices to be installed. There are shorter-term agreements to install practices needed to meet wildlife emergencies, as approved by the NRCS state conservationist. NRCS also can enter into 15-year agreements with program participants who wish to undertake habitat development practices on essential plant

and animal habitat. Up to 15 percent of WHIP funds are available for 15-year agreements.

Q. What is the minimum acreage required or the maximum acreage or payment allowed?

- A. NRCS does not place limits on the number of acres that can be enrolled in the program or the amount of payment made; however, some states may choose to establish such requirements.

NRCS welcomes projects that provide valuable wildlife habitat and does not want to discourage any landowner who desires to implement practices to improve habitat conditions for declining species.

Q. Who determines which applications are funded?

- A. NRCS selects applications based on state developed ranking processes that achieve state-specific wildlife goals and objectives. Conservation districts convene local work groups to identify wildlife habitat priorities. The local work groups provide input to the state technical committee that works with the state conservationist to develop a state WHIP plan. The ranking process is derived from the priorities identified in the state WHIP plan.

Q. Are landowners required to give the public access to land developed or protected under WHIP?

- A. No. Landowners can prevent trespass and control access by the general public. The landowner must allow NRCS access to the area to monitor the effectiveness of the practices during the agreement period.

For More Information

If you need more information about WHIP, please contact your local USDA service center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information is also available on the Internet at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/.

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